



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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Federal regulation of Washington nurseries angers WSDA officials

OLYMPIA – Officials from the Washington State Department of Agriculture’s (WSDA) said today they “strongly disagree” with the decision to force Washington nurseries to comply with new federal regulations before shipping certain plants out-of-state.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced that an emergency order has been imposed on Washington nurseries, requiring their plants be inspected and sampled for sudden oak death (SOD) before they can be shipped out-of-state. The order is scheduled to take effect Jan. 10.

“Washington is being unfairly penalized for doing an excellent job of finding and destroying SOD-infected plants,” said WSDA Director Valoria Loveland. “This is a disservice to our nurseries which have been extremely diligent and cooperative in trying to get rid of this destructive plant disease.”

Since SOD was first detected in Washington in May 2003, WSDA has put in place the most aggressive sudden oak death nursery survey and eradication program in the country, state officials said. Washington processed more SOD national survey samples in 2004 than all other western states combined, according to the *USDA Western Region SOD Update* (June 1, 2004).

Other results of WSDA’s nursery survey and eradication program:

- Of the 25 Washington nurseries testing positive for SOD, 20 have undergone complete disease eradication procedures required by federal mandates, and five nurseries are nearing completion of the eradication procedure.
- With the exception of two groups of SOD-infected plants whose origin cannot be determined, all SOD material found in Washington has been imported from out of state.
- No infected plant found in another state has been traced to Washington.
- Only two of the 25 Washington nurseries testing positive for SOD have been “production nurseries.” State officials said the infected stock in the two nurseries was quickly destroyed.

“We’re proud of our efforts to find the disease, get rid of it, and keep it out,” Loveland said. “No infected plants in other states have been traced to a Washington nursery. We don’t think this order by the USDA is necessary or justified.”

The pathogen causing SOD is *Phytophthora ramorum*, for which no cure is known. The disease was detected for the first time in the U.S. in California in 1995. The plant disease attacks a wide variety of host

material, including many species commonly found in Washington such as camellia, Douglas fir, evergreen huckleberry, kalmia, pieris, rhododendron, and viburnum.

The federal regulation announced today will require all Washington nurseries shipping plants out-of-state be inspected and sampled before shipment. Dr. Brad White, WSDA's pest program manager, noted the USDA's order even includes non-host material – "anything with *Phytophthora ramorum*-like symptoms."

Even before the quarantine was announced, WSDA was struggling to come up with the funds to continue its aggressive survey and eradication program. At the agency's request, Gov. Locke made \$96,000 available from his emergency fund to help the department continue the work.

Washington is the third state in the country to be regulated by U.S. Department of Agriculture for the disease. California and Oregon were the first two.

Persons with questions on the new federal regulations may contact White by telephone at (360) 902-2071 or e-mail at bwhite@agr.wa.gov; or visit the WSDA Web site at www.agr.wa.gov, and click respectively on "Plants and Insects" and then "Plant Diseases."

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